

Submitter: Richard Sheperd
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation
Measure: HB2692

Dear Co-Chairs McLain and Gorsek, Co-Chairs Boshart Davis and Boquist,
and Members of the Joint Transportation Committee,

I am writing to ask for your support for HB 2692, and to further ask that this study include: acquiring right-of-way, double-tracking rails, modernize our signaling systems, electrifying our rails and trains, and making our stations more accessible.

Almost every day at noon, Portland Union station is packed. Students are going headed home to visit family, folks are coming to Portland to interview for jobs, and of course there are the couples going out to "get away" from the city. It's a very electric feeling.

Getting on the train is a bit more difficult. The train is a few steps up from the station platform, which means people and wheelchairs and those with luggage struggle to get onto the train. Riding trains in the Northeast, most station platforms are level with the entry to the train. This allows anyone with a wheelchair, luggage, or stroller to simply roll onto the train from the platform. This design flaw usually adds a good 10-15 minutes to get rolling out of the station.

Once you're out on the rails, the ride is spectacular. You can watch the scenery of farms and rolling hills, get some work done, or just take a nap. You just have to cross your fingers that a freight train 5 miles long train doesn't come down the single track rail, which can take well over an hour to pass in some cases. That's usually a good time to help yourself to a beer or glass of wine. After all, it's self-driving vehicle!

But there's one even more major flaw: we only run two trains per day along this route. It is abysmal that the Cascades corridor only offers two trains per day. We can and must do better.

To really transform rail service into a viable alternative to driving, the Cascades needs to provide hourly train service along the Cascades corridor, at least. While it is limited due to lack of staffing and capacity at Amtrak, the lack of dedicated right-of-way also makes a significant impact leading to long delays along the corridor due pass freight trains on a single track with short sidings.

In order for us to meet the goal of hourly train service, this agreement should also include a plan to:

- Acquire separated Right-of-Way
- Build out double tracked rail throughout the corridor
- Modernize signaling
- Electrify the rails along the route
- Upgrade stations and platforms to level-door boarding to obtain accessible boarding
- Purchase modern electric locomotives and cars

Performing these upgrades will get us on the path to something better than High-Speed rail, which is frequent, high-capacity, accessible, reliable, 100+ mile-per-hour passenger rail that we will see within our lifetimes.

Please support HB 2692, and include in the study a plan for acquiring right-of-way and modernizing our rails, our trains, and our stations along the Cascades rail route.

Sincerely,
Richard Sheperd